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SENSITIVE
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RIYADH FOR RMO MSRINIVASAN

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TAGS: [KFLU](#) [AEMR](#) [AMED](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [TBIO](#) [KSAF](#) [KPAO](#)
PREL, PINR, AMGT, MG, QA
SUBJECT: EMBASSY REVIEWS READINESS FOR SEVERE H1N1 OUTBREAK

REF: A. STATE 0099088
[¶](#)B. DOHA 513

(SBU) KEY POINTS

-- On October 25, Pandemic Influenza Working Group (PIWG) met to discuss Embassy's preparedness for a severe influenza pandemic in light of reftel guidance and the current state of H1N1 infection in Qatar. Included in the discussion was a review of the Management Notices and Warden Messages issued by the Embassy over the last six months.

-- Embassy nurse reported that the health unit had acquired seasonal influenza vaccines through the local health authorities and hoped to do the same for the H1N1 vaccine.

-- Two Embassy dependents were diagnosed with H1N1 during the summer break, and one LES contracted a probable case in Yemen.

-- PIWG reviewed preparations already made by Embassy to cope with a severe influenza pandemic, and DCM designated responsibilities for addressing issues related to potential water and food shortages in the event of a severe outbreak.

-- Embassy awaits forthcoming guidance from Washington to finalize our review of pandemic influenza tripwires.

End Key Points.

[¶](#)1. (SBU) On October 25, the Pandemic Influenza Working Group (PIWG) met, as requested reftel, to review the current status of H1N1 infection Qatar and the steps that the Embassy has taken to prepare for a severe influenza outbreak, should that occur. DCM chaired the meeting with representatives from P/E, PAO, OMC, CONS, CLO, Health Unit, Camp As-Saliyah, and Al Udeid Air Base in attendance.

[¶](#)2. (SBU) The Management and Consular Sections reported that the following H1N1-related Warden Notices and Management Notices had been issued during the past six months:

-- April 30 Warden Notice: H1N1 Influenza A
-- June 17 Warden Notice: H1N1 Influenza Cases in Qatar
-- August 10 Management Notice: RMO Information Session
-- August 27 Management Notice: H1N1 General Reminder
-- October 6 Management Notice: Influenza Vaccinations

[¶](#)3. (SBU) The nurse reported that the Embassy had secured sufficient seasonal influenza vaccines for the Embassy

community through Hamad Hospital. She said that the H1N1 vaccine has not yet been shipped from the U.S., and there is currently no target date for delivery. The health unit had administered 82 doses of the seasonal vaccine to date, and a number of Embassy children were vaccinated at school. She said that all 23 primary health care facilities in the country should have adequate supplies of the seasonal vaccine, and that the level of communication between the public health authorities and the health unit remains good. (Note: Media reported November 1 that a first batch of 20,000 doses of H1N1 vaccine had arrived in Qatar and would be used primarily to vaccinate those going on the Hajj pilgrimage. The pilgrimage season begins at the end of November. End note.)

¶4. (SBU) The DCM asked about the current state of affairs within the Embassy community and in Qatari society generally.

The nurse replied that two Embassy dependents had confirmed diagnoses of H1N1 during the summer break, and that one LES was considered "highly probable" for H1N1 (contracted during leave in Yemen). U.S. military representatives noted that there have been two confirmed cases at Camp As-Saliyah, with three more suspected cases awaiting official confirmation.

¶5. (SBU) In Qatari society generally, the nurse reported that the public health authorities had stopped testing for H1N1, and as a matter of course are now giving suspected H1N1 sufferers a supply of Tamiflu and sending them home, rather than placing them in isolation. Two schools were closed the previous week because of H1N1 cases among the student population. (Note: On October 29, subsequent to the PIWG

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meeting, the Supreme Council of Health reported the fourth death from H1N1 in Qatar. The victim was a 13 year-old boy who suffered from Down's syndrome. End Note.) Separately, the Consular Chief reported that he had received no communications from the U.S. citizen population indicating particular alarm about H1N1 influenza and CLO reported the same with respect to the Embassy community.

¶6. (SBU) The PIWG reviewed the steps taken by the Embassy to date to prepare for a severe influenza pandemic and identified areas warranting additional measures. The group noted reftel guidance that personnel should be instructed to store sufficient food for 12 weeks, the time that such a pandemic would likely last. Management Officer noted that his section was responsible for ensuring an adequate water supply to the Mission community, and the group identified additional sources of emergency supplies of water such as residential holding tanks and swimming pools. Management Officer also reported that the cascade telephone list -- used to notify Embassy personnel in the event of an emergency -- was recently updated.

¶7. (SBU) The group discussed sanitary procedures within the Embassy. The Embassy nurse said that 40 hand sanitizers had been received and are scheduled to be installed at various locations in the Embassy. All agreed that the janitorial staff could do a better job of cleaning commonly-touched areas such as counters and door-handles in the Embassy.

¶8. (SBU) The Consular Chief reminded the group of the importance of the 'no double standard' mandate and of ensuring that relevant information regarding recommended actions passed to the Embassy community is also passed to the American community at large.

¶9. (SBU) The PIWG noted that it had begun revising its pandemic flu tripwires soon after the initial H1N1 outbreak. The Embassy now awaits additional guidance from the Department promised reftel to close out this effort.

¶10. (SBU) Based upon these discussions and reftel contents, DCM assigned action on several items:

For Management:

-- Formulate and present to the PIWG for discussion a plan for water conservation and distribution in the event of failure of the public water supply.

-- Develop an internal communications action plan to promote Mission awareness of and adherence to sound health practices.

-- Work with the janitorial staff to ensure regular cleaning of commonly-touched areas, including counters, door panels and door-handles.

-- For OMC: Contact Al Udeid Air Base and determine what access the Embassy might have to Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) in the event of a sustained food shortage.

LeBaron